

Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is about applying the collective knowledge of the whole organisation to achieve explicit organisational goals. The aim of knowledge management is not necessarily to manage all knowledge, just the knowledge that is most important to the organisation. It is about ensuring that people have the knowledge they need, where they need it, when they need it - the right knowledge, in the right place, at the right time.

Good facilities management can help to create an environment in which people are encouraged to experiment, learn, share and use knowledge together for the benefit of the organisation, the people who work in it, and the organisation's customers. Design of workplace premises and systems should support knowledge sharing and distribution within the organisation. Meeting rooms, filing systems and carefully designed office layouts should facilitate information exchange, storage and manipulation in the workplace. Creating a more effective and productive workplace should be one of the key aims of any facilities operation.

The management of knowledge within the facilities operations can be more demanding. As a developing profession FM is learning all the time and developing a body of expertise and information to enhance service activities. Knowledge management processes should be embedded into the whole philosophy of operation.

Facilities teams are the stewards of a great deal of information about their customers, the workplace, faults, trends and performance data. Help desks, access control systems and maintenance records are rich with data which is not always put to good purpose. Facilities Management is often too involved in day to day operational issues to take time to analyse the information available in order to improve tomorrow's performance.

Knowledge Management is the process of creating, capturing, and using knowledge to enhance organisational performance - something that can happen naturally. However it is by explicitly designing and implementing tools, processes, systems, structures, and cultures for knowledge management that maximum benefit can be achieved.

By capturing existing data and applying professional experience, emotional intelligence and facilities management expertise facts can be converted into knowledge that can then be applied in the development of new facilities strategies and initiatives. By abandoning the outdated concept that "Knowledge is power" and collaborating with service partners and front line staff the FM can create genuine value for all stakeholders.

The Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDEA) has a useful Knowledge Management Best practice website at www.idea.gov.uk which has tools, techniques case studies and reference material relevant to any organisation.